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SUBJECT: TURKS ASSERT WILLINGNESS TO MOVE FORWARD DURING  
BRUCE JACKSON'S VISIT

Sensitive but Unclassified -- Protect Accordingly

1. (SBU) Summary: During a June 1-4 visit to Ankara, President of the Project on Transitional Democracies Bruce Jackson urged Turkish officials to consider a wider, European context as it pursues foreign policy over the next 18 months. GOT interlocutors embraced Jackson's message and seemed willing to move forward on a host of issues. Although Jackson suggested that the GOT not dwell only on Iraq and look to other areas in which to take steps, Turks across the board were eager to discuss GOT Iraq policy in the run up to war as largely a reflection of the blame game, still underway in Ankara, that makes rapid action difficult. End summary.

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The Message  
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2. (SBU) In a June 1-4 visit to Ankara, President of the Project on Transitional Democracies Bruce Jackson met with a variety of senior Turkish government officials (including Justice Minister Cicek, MFA U/S Ziyal, P.M. Erdogan advisor Davutoglu, and AK vice chairman for foreign affairs Disli), TGS J-5 Gen. Turgut, and press. Jackson outlined his organization's vision of a united, democratic Europe -- including western Balkans, Ukraine, and Caucasus -- and Turkey's key role in completing that vision.

3. (SBU) Jackson urged Turkish officials to consider the big picture as key deadlines, such as the December 2004 EU summit, are approaching. He encouraged them to take concrete steps quickly both internally and regionally to help strengthen trans-atlantic ties and to bring Europe together. As an example, Jackson suggested that Turkey contribute immediately to a solution in Nagorno-Karabakh. On Turkey-U.S. relations, Jackson noted that personal relationships matter and that Turkey should seek to explore ways -- other than in Iraq -- that it can help build stronger U.S. ties. Jackson stressed that the important thing will be to achieve early successes to create momentum that will carry over into more sensitive issues.

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Turks receptive...  
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4. (SBU) Across the board, GOT officials were eager to express their willingness to move forward on a variety of issues. Offering a representative view, Disli began his meeting with Jackson by asking, "How can we make things better?" Minister Cicek agreed with Jackson that U.S.-Turkish cooperation in southeastern Europe is key to regional stability. He also added, "we are ready to help out in every way in the Middle East." Noting his appreciation of USG support for Turkey's EU membership, Davutoglu said that the GOT shares Jackson's view of the significance of transatlantic cooperation in the European project. Echoing Jackson, Davutoglu said that the current institutional constellations in the western Balkans should be expanded to the Black Sea region and Caucasus.

5. (SBU) MFA officials also, in large part, embraced Jackson's message. MFA U/S Ziyal said Turkey will continue its regional work to move "from survival to quality of life issues" -- i.e. to eliminate regional security concerns and to focus on development. In a forward-leaning presentation to Jackson, MFA DDG for European Affairs Yenel outlined a clear strategy for the run-up to December 2004. The GOT, Yenel explained, understands that it must pass all of the legislation for EU political criteria this year and will work on implementation next year.

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... But Still Defensive on Iraq

16. (SBU) Although Jackson repeatedly attempted to steer discussions away from Iraq, our interlocutors felt compelled to defend Turkey's policy prior to and during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Without prompting from Jackson, Turkish officials spoke as if from the same talking points:

-- Minister Cicek, Disli, Amb. Ender Arat -- foreign affairs advisor to Erdogan -- and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Mehmet Dulger cited Turkey's losses in the first Gulf War and the distribution of political cartoons disparaging F.M. Gul as factors playing on the minds of M.P.s and thus contributing to the failure of March 1;

-- Arat further noted that Kurdish opposition groups in N. Iraq held anti-Turkish demonstrations on March 1;

-- Disli and MFA Deputy U/S Banguoglu claimed that, in any case, Turkey had contributed more to USG efforts in Iraq than any other country except the U.K.;

17. (SBU) More informally over dinner at the Ambassador's residence, our contacts were more willing to point out other, more substantial factors. Opposition DYP vice chairman Ensarioglu stated that the AK government's March 1 motion contrasted with the "policy of the State." Columnist Cuneyt Ulsever highlighted "military foot-dragging" and also rejected the polite explanation offered by AK's Reha Denemec, who had focused on parliamentary procedural and arithmetical obstacles in the voting process. Seconding Ulsever's point, AK M.P. Ersonmez Yarbay, a long-time contact, observed in an aside to us that Denemec was unwilling to air Turkey's dirty laundry "in front of strangers" -- a point later volunteered privately by Denemec himself.

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Comment  
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18. (SBU) In their meetings with Jackson, Turkish officials of all stripes clearly indicated a willingness to move forward but, in many cases, were unable to express in concrete terms how they will do that. On normalizing relations with Armenia, for example, our interlocutors recognize the need for progress but continue to hew to the line that Armenia must make the first move. We will continue to press our GOT contacts to move beyond words to concrete policy initiatives.  
PEARSON